

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 12721

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: FOR THE RPR AND CHIRAC -- A DIFFICULT DILEMMA

SUMMARY. IN SPITE OF ITS APPARENT STRENGTH, THE RPR AND JACQUES CHIRAC ARE FACED WITH AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE. GAULLIST POWER HAS BEEN IN DECLINE SINCE 1974, AND AT A SPECIAL CONGRESS ON APRIL 9, THE RPR LEADERSHIP PREPARED ITS DEFENSES AGAINST FURTHER ENCROACHMENT BY GISCARD AND THE UDF. THE NEXT OBJECTIVE OF THE RPR IS TO CONSOLIDATE ITS STRONG POSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY AND AROUND THE COUNTRY; IN SO DOING IT WILL ALSO BE PREPARING ITSELF FOR THE 1981 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THE DILEMMA POSED TO THE GAULLISTS, HOWEVER, IS HOW TO ATTAIN THIS GOAL GIVEN THE PRESENT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT AND GIVEN GISCARD'S AND BARRE'S ABILITY TO MANIPULATE IT. END SUMMARY.

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1. POST ELECTORAL BALANCE SHEET: WITH 154 DEPUTIES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 6 MINISTERS, 4 SECRETARIES OF STATE AND A TIGHTLY ORGANIZED, HIGHLY DISCIPLINED PARTY STRUCTURE WITH 600,000 MEMBERS, THE RPR REMAINS THE MOST POWERFUL PARTY IN THE MAJORITY. BUT AT THE SPECIAL PARTY CONGRESS APRIL 9, JACQUES CHIRAC AND THE LEADERS OF THE RPR TOOK A HIGHLY DEFENSIVE STANCE VIS-A-VIS THE PRESI-

DENT AND THEIR UDF PARTNERS. IN EFFECT, THE GAULLISTS WARNED THE PRESIDENT AND BARRE THAT THEY ARE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH AND THAT THEIR SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE CONTINGENT UPON THE GOVERNMENT'S OBSERVANCE OF GAULLIST PRINCIPLES AND ITS HONORING OF THE COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE RPR DURING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. THIS DEFENSIVENESS REFLECTS THE DECLINING STATUS OF THE GAULLISTS IN SPITE OF THEIR APPARENT STRENGTH. 183 GAULLIST DEPUTIES OPENED THE ASSEMBLY IN 1973 VERSUS 154 NOW. THE GAULLISTS LOST CONTROL OF THE PRESIDENCY IN 1974, OF THE PRIME MINISTRY IN 1976, AND OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1978. OF THE SIX GAULLIST MINISTERS, FOUR ARE ONLY NOMINALLY RPR. JUSTICE MINISTER PEYREFITTE IS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH GISCARD. MINISTERS BOURGES (DEFENSE), BOULIN (LABOR AND PARTICIPATION) AND GALLEY (COOPERATION) HAVE SERVED IN ALL THREE BARRE GOVERNMENTS AND HAVE BECOME MORE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH BARRE THAN CHIRAC. THE ELECTION OF GAULLIST CHABAN-DELMAS TO THE PRESIDENCY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN OPPOSITION TO THE RPR CANDIDATE FAURE, SPLITTING THE RPR VOTE AND OBTAINING THE ALMOST UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF THE UDF, SOUNDED ALARMS AT THE RPR. EVEN ITS HERETOFORE UNQUESTIONED DOMINANCE OF THE MAJORITY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS NOW BEING BROUGHT INTO QUESTION. CHIRAC'S RESPONSE WAS THE SPECIAL CONGRESS ON APRIL 9.

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2. GIRDING THE FLANKS: THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CONGRESS WAS THREE-FOLD: (A) CLEARLY ESTABLISH CHIRAC'S ROLE AS GAULLIST LEADER AND PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RPR'S (AND MAJORITY'S) VICTORY; (B) LAY OUT THE PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAMS WHICH WILL DETERMINE THE RPR GROUP'S POSITIONS IN THE NEW ASSEMBLY; AND (C) PROVIDE MEANS OF IMPROVING INTERNAL RPR DISCIPLINE WHICH WILL BE A KEY FACTOR IN WHAT THE RPR LEADERSHIP SEES AS A CONTINUING STRUGGLE WITH THE GISCARDIAN UDF FOR DOMINANCE WITHIN THE MAJORITY. WHILE THE SEQUENCE OF SPEECHES PRAISING CHIRAC AT THE CONGRESS GREW REPETITIOUS (AND SLIGHTLY RIDICULOUS), THE FACT REMAINS THAT CHIRAC PUT FORTH AN ENORMOUS EFFORT DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND CAN (AND DOES) CLAIM SUBSTANTIAL CREDIT FOR THE VICTORY. MANY OF THE RPR DEPUTIES, PARTICULARLY THE ONE-THIRD WHO ARE NEW, OWE THEIR VICTORIES TO CHIRAC, AND HE CAN JUSTIFIABLY CLAIM THEIR SUPPORT. IN THEIR SPEECHES, YVES GUENA (POLITICAL COUNSELOR) AND CHIRAC UNDERLINED THE POTENTIAL THREAT TO THE RPR POSED BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE UDF. GUENA POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THE RPR PROVIDED THE MAJORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT, "CERTAIN IN-

DIVIDUALS" WERE WILLING TO RISK A VICTORY BY THE LEFT
AND THE DECLINE OF FRANCE IN ORDER TO REDUCE GAULLIST
POWER. CHIRAC STATED THAT THE RPR WAS NOT CONSIDERED

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A FULL PARTNER WITHIN THE MAJORITY, BUT RATHER AN OBSTA-
CLE TO THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION DESIRED BY THE UDF AND
THE PRESIDENT. CRITICIZING THE PRESIDENT DIRECTLY,
CHIRAC ACCUSED HIM OF DESIRING A SOCIALIST-CENTRIST
COALITION WHICH WOULD EXCLUDE THE GAULLISTS, AND OF IN-
TENDING TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES OTHER THAN THOSE FOR WHICH
THE MAJORITY WAS RETURNED TO POWER. THE RPR WOULD NOT
GIVE CARTE BLANCHE TO THE GOVERNMENT, BUT WOULD DECIDE
ITS SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS ON A CASE-BY-
CASE BASIS.

3. RPR POSITIONS: THE RPR POSITIONS CAN BE SUMMED UP
AS FOLLOWS:
-- NO TO EVOLUTION TOWARD AN AMERICAN-STYLE PRE-
SIDENTIAL REGIME.
-- NO TO A RETURN TO PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

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- NO TO DEVOLUTION OF POWER TO REGIONAL ORGANS.
- NO TO CREEPING EUROPEAN INTEGRATION.
- VIGILANCE AGAINST ANY EFFORT TO DEVELOP A SOCIALIST-CENTRIST COALITION AND EFFORTS TO "REBALANCE" THE MAJORITY.
- RIGOROUS SUPPORT OF THE PRESENT INSTITUTIONS OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC.
- COMPLETE SUPPORT FOR PRESENT DEFENSE POLICY BASED ON NUCLEAR DETERRENCE.
- IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES ASSERTING THE PRIMACY OF POLICIES OF FULL EMPLOYMENT, IMPROVED NATIONAL PLANNING AND FREEDOM OF ENTERPRISE INCLUDING RELAXATION OF PRICE CONTROLS.
- IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL POLICIES EMPHASIZING WORKER PARTICIPATION.
- IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATE'S CAPABILITY AND AUTHORITY NEEDED TO BETTER PROTECT PEOPLE AND PROPERTY.

4. CHIRAC'S THIRD OBJECTIVE AT THE CONGRESS WAS TO ESTABLISH BETTER MEANS OF INTRA-PARTY DISCIPLINE. THIS WAS IMPLEMENTED BY (A) CHANGING THE RULES TO EXCLUDE FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ANYONE WHO HELD A HIGH-RANKING POSITION IN THE GOVERNMENT (MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE) OR WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF A LEGISLATIVE BODY (CHABAN-DELMAS); (B) CHANGING RULES TO ALLOW THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO DISMISS PARTY SECRETARIES AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL FOR FAILING TO FOLLOW PARTY DISCIPLINE (THE PARTY SECRETARY IN THE DISTRICT IS THE KEY MAN POLITICALLY FOR A DEPUTY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY); AND (C) BROADENING THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP TO INCLUDE THE DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARIES (CHOSEN BY THE

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PARTY LEADERSHIP UNDER CHIRAC'S CONTROL AND THUS STACKING THE VOTES IN THE COMMITTEE) AND DEPUTIES (THUS BRINGING THEM UNDER MORE PRESSURE TO ADHERE TO PARTY DISCIPLINE).

5. THE DILEMMA: THE FUTURE OF THE RPR IS CLOUDY AND COULD BE VERY MUCH MORE SO AFTER THREE MORE YEARS IN GISCARD'S SHADOW AND IN COMPETITION WITH HIS POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. THE DILEMMA POSED FOR THE RPR IS HOW TO

PLAY THE ROLE OF THE MAJOR PARTY IN FRANCE, GIVEN THE STRONG POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY AND THE INITIATIVE RESERVED TO THE GOVERNMENT. AN OVERACTIVE POLICY BY CHIRAC WOULD BE UNWELCOME BY A PUBLIC WHICH HAS HAD ITS FILL AFTER SIX MONTHS OF INTENSIVE CAMPAIGN AND WHICH DOES NOT APPRECIATE WHAT IT WOULD CONSIDER ATTACKS ON ITS PRESIDENT. A LOW PROFILE, ON THE OTHER HAND, LEAVES IT TO CHIRAC'S RIVALS TO CHOOSE THE GROUND ON WHICH TO DO BATTLE AND ITS TIMING. SOME OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES WHICH ARE COMING UP SOON GIVE AN IDEA OF THE LIMITS ON BOTH SIDES IN THIS POLITICAL TUG OF WAR.

6. THE CONSTRAINTS: WHILE THE RPR LEADERSHIP MAY TAKE A HARD-NOSED POSITION TOWARD GISCARD AND BARRE IN AN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE AS A PARTY AND CHIRAC'S NATIONAL IMAGE AS A POTENTIAL CONTENDER FOR THE PRESIDENCY, IT FACES MAJOR CONSTRAINTS. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, RPR EFFORTS WILL PROBABLY BE MORE STORM THAN SUBSTANCE. FIRST, NEITHER CHIRAC NOR THE RPR DEPUTIES WISH TO BRING ON A GOVERNMENT CRISIS (WITH ITS POTENTIAL FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF ELECTIONS) AT THIS TIME. GAULLIST LEADER DEBRE, BOTH IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CONGRESS AND IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH THE PRESS, EMPHASIZED THAT THE GAULLISTS WILL SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT AS LONG AS ITS PROGRAM HONORS THE BASIC IDEAS OF GAULLISM AND TAKES THE RPR'S ELECTORAL PLATFORM INTO

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CONSIDERATION. IN OTHER WORDS, THE GAULLISTS WILL SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM, WITH MORE OR LESS ENTHUSIASM, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THEY ARE FORCED TO DO OTHERWISE ON SUBSTANTIVE GROUNDS OR PERCEIVE A POLITICALLY SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT.

7. SECOND, CONCERNING DOMESTIC POLICY, BARRE WILL PROBABLY PROPOSE LEGISLATION BASED ON THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF HIS BLOIS PROGRAM, ALREADY GIVEN QUALIFIED APPROVAL (THOUGH IT GOES NOT FAR ENOUGH IN CERTAIN AREAS FOR THE RPR) BY CHIRAC DURING THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. WHILE THE RPR WILL CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES OF FULL EMPLOYMENT, INCREASED SOCIAL AND FAMILY BENEFITS, AND INVESTMENT INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE EXPANSION OF ESPECIALLY PROMISING SECTORS, INDIVIDUAL RPR DEPUTIES HAVE INDICATED TO EMBOFF THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FINANCIAL
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CONSTRAINTS FACED BY BARRE. IT IS IN THE FALL, DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE, THAT THE RESTRUCTURING AND RE-LAUNCHING OF THE ECONOMY COULD BRING THE MORE EXPANSIONIST-MINDED GAULLISTS INTO CONFLICT WITH THE MORE FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE POLICIES OF BARRE. THE CONFLICT REMAINS, HOWEVER, A QUESTION OF EMPHASIS, NOT PRINCIPLE.

8. IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADITIONALLY SENSITIVE TO THE GAULLISTS, DIRECT CONFRONTATION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS ALSO UNLIKELY. TO THE EXTENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RPR CONTINUE TO BE SENSITIVE TO EACH OTHER'S POSITIONS, POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CONFRONTATION CAN BE AVOIDED. THE QUESTION OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE JAMAICA ACCORDS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE. THE RPR HAS ALREADY TAKEN A POSITION IN OPPOSITION TO THE ACCORDS AGREED TO BY THE GOF. THE ACCORDS, HOWEVER, HAVE GONE INTO EFFECT WITHOUT FRANCE'S RATIFICATION, AND UNLESS FRANCE INCREASES CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMF, IT WILL LOSE ITS AUTOMATIC SEAT ON THE BOARD AND ACCESS TO THE IN-

CREASED SDRS. BARRE HAS DECIDED TO PRESENT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY A TECHNICAL BILL WHICH WOULD AUTHORIZE THE INCREASED ALLOCATION, WITHOUT CALLING FOR A VOTE TO APPROVE THE PRINCIPLE OF THE ACCORDS. THE RPR CAN THUS VOTE THE MEASURE AND MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF ITS POSITION, AND THE GOF CAN OBTAIN THE NEEDED AUTHORITY.

9. THE ELECTION FOR THE EUROPEAN ASSEMBLY TO BE HELD IN 1979 MAY PROVIDE THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY FOR CHIRAC AND THE RPR TO CONTEND WITH GISCARD IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN POLICY. BOTH THE RPR AND THE UDF INTEND TO PRESENT A SEPARATE LIST OF CANDIDATES. THE ELECTION WILL OFFER THE RPR A CLEAR FIELD TO OPPOSE GISCARD AND THE GOVERNMENT ON ITS EEC AND ATLANTIC POLICIES, CLEARLY MARKING

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THE RPR'S GAULLIST IDENTITY AND PROVIDING A LESS RISKY ARENA FOR CONFRONTATION THAN IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SECOND, IT WILL PROVIDE A MEASURE TO JUDGE CHIRAC'S SUCCESS IN ATTEMPTING TO BUILD UP THE RPR TO THE THIRTY PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE WHICH HE HAS SET AS A TARGET FOR 1981, THE DATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IF THE GAULLISTS COME CLOSE TO THIRTY PERCENT OF THE VOTE, IT WILL BE A MAJOR STEP IN CHIRAC'S PREPARATION TO CHALLENGE GISCARD. MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE CHIRAC'S TARGET IS UNREALISTICALLY HIGH AND THAT IT IS IN THIS FOREIGN POLICY AREA THAT GISCARD AND THE UDF SHOULD BE STRONGEST.

10. IT IS IN THE DOMESTIC AREA, HOWEVER, THAT THE RPR AND CHIRAC WILL BE MOST VIGILANT OF GISCARD AND THE UDF. ONE POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT ISSUE IS GISCARD'S INTENT TO "ENLARGE THE MAJORITY". THIS OBJECTIVE CAN BE ROUGHLY DEFINED AS CREATING A POLITICAL CLIMATE IN WHICH THE NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS THROUGH POLITICAL DIALOGUE, CONSULTATIONS CONCERNING GOVERNMENT PROGRAM PROPOSALS, AND WHEN POSSIBLE, LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS - UNTIL SUCH TIME (PERHAPS FAR OFF) AS THE NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION COULD SHARE OR ALTERNATE IN POSITIONS OF POWER, LARGELY INDEPENDENT OF THE COMMUNISTS AND WITHOUT THE THREAT OF UPHEAVAL IN FRANCE'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS. THIS IS A LONG-RANGE GOAL AND ONE WHICH WOULD REQUIRE BOTH THE REDUCTION OF GAULLIST POLITICAL STRENGTH AND THE WILLINGNESS OF THE NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION TO ENTER THE POLITICAL PROCESS UNDER THOSE CONDITIONS. GISCARD'S EFFORTS TO MOVE TOWARD THIS GOAL WILL OBVIOUSLY BE OPPOSED BY THE GAULLISTS AND IT IS OVER THIS PROBLEM THAT A CRITICAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GISCARD AND CHIRAC IS MOST LIKELY. ANY GENUINE EFFORT BY GISCARD TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE

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ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION IN DETERMINING GOVERNMENT POLICY
OR TO OBTAIN ITS LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT
PROPOSALS THROUGH CONCESSIONS COULD PROVIDE THE BASIS
FOR A GAULLIST ATTACK.

11. CONCLUSION: WHILE THE RPR AND CHIRAC FEEL THAT GIS-
CARD AND THE UDF ARE INTENT UPON REDUCING GAULLIST PO-
WER AND SHIFTING THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE TOWARDS THE
CENTER-LEFT, THEY ARE LIMITED IN THEIR ABILITY TO PRE-
VENT IT. GISCARD AND BARRE ARE UNLIKELY TO PROVIDE MUCH
POLITICAL TERRAIN UPON WHICH CHIRAC COULD MOUNT A CHAL-
LENGE. CHIRAC HAS IN THE MEANTIME TURNED THE RPR INTO A
TIGHTLY CONTROLLED POLITICAL MACHINE TO SUPPORT HIS PO-

LICY OF WATCHFUL WAITING, AND HE WILL BE LOOKING FOR
REASONS TO CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT AND INDIRECTLY DIS-
CREDIT THE PRESIDENT. WHILE BRINGING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT
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IS PROBABLY THE LEAST DESIRABLE OF THE RPR'S OPTIONS, IT
REMAINS A POSSIBILITY AND POSSIBLY AT A LATER DATE EVEN
A NECESSITY IF THE RPR AND JACQUES CHIRAC ARE TO AVOID
A SLOW DEATH UNDER TEN MORE YEARS OF A GISCARDIAN PRE-
SIDENCY.
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